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ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings of a study that examined urban school district superintendents' perceptions of the methods by which the Ohio Department of Education (DOE) influenced Ohio's public school districts. In particular, the superintendents were asked about the influence and control utilized by the State Department of Education to implement legislative mandates. Etzioni's Compliance Theory (1975) provided the conceptual framework. Etzioni argued that because schools, like religious and political organizations, are normative organizations, coercion may be considered incongruent with the psychological disposition of teachers and administrators. A survey of 58 Ohio urban, public school superintendents elicited 42 responses, a 72 percent return rate. A concurrent study of 42 urban superintendents, 53 suburban superintendents, and 63 rural superintendents compared responses across school district type. Findings indicate that urban superintendents viewed the Ohio DOE as primarily using expert power and information power. Urban superintendents also perceived the DOE as using a higher degree of reward power than did their rural and suburban counterparts. All superintendents reported that the DOE utilized normative, remunerative, and coercive methods of power. The use of coercive power, however, is incongruous with the needs of a majority of normative organizations. It is recommended that: (1) the State DOE try to serve as an advocate for urban school districts; (2) school personnel statewide work cooperatively toward similar goals; and (3) the chief state school officer and the governor present a unified stance. Seven tables are included. (LMI)

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The State's Role in Implementing Legislative Mandates:

The Urban School Superintendents' Perspective

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The purpose of this study was to determine urban school superintendents' perceptions of the methods by which the Ohio Department of Education influences Ohio's public school districts. This study was designed to answer practical questions about the influence and control the state department of education utilized while implementing legislative mandates. In addition, this study examines the relative importance of these criteria as perceived by urban public school superintendents in Ohio. Results were then analyzed to determine if the superintendents' perceptions of the state's use of power were consistent with those recommended by Etzioni's Compliance Theory (1975).

Etzioni categorized organizations based on the dominant compliance mode. More directly, Etzioni investigated the relationship between superordinates' power use in organizations and subordinates' perceptions and responses. He theorized that compliance patterns in organizations result from an interaction of the dominant type of power used and the subordinates' dominant type of involvement. Specifically, Etzioni postulated that the use of coercive control is congruent with alienative involvement (hostile), that remunerative means of control are consistent with calculative involvement (neutral feelings, material benefits), and that normative control is associated with moral involvement (strong beliefs and values about the organization).

Because schools, like religious and political organizations, are normative organizations, Etzioni argued that the use of certain types of power, such as coercion, may be considered incongruent with the psychological disposition of teachers and administrators and thus have significant negative consequences. Failure to use "appropriate" types of power within the context of the subordinate's perspective leads to negative outcomes at the individual level (employee resentment, low morale, alienation), and to instability at the organizational level (Cusick, 1983; Lortie, 1975; Wynne, 1987). Schools are normative in character and it is important to recognize the importance of certain values (equity, fairness) in relation to understanding teachers, administrators, and their responses to each other (Cusick, 1983; Dreeben, 1968; Blase, 1988).

Etzioni offered a framework for securing subordinate compliance that suggests the administrator has three possible types of power and that there are predictable relationships between the type exercised and the subordinate reaction and other organizational variables.

Data for the study were gathered by mailing a copy of the Power Perception Profile: Perception of Other to the selected superintendents. A random selection of 58 Ohio public urban school superintendents were assessed with a survey instrument to which 42 superintendents responded, resulting in a 72 percent return rate. Data collected reflects the superintendents'

perceptions of the power methods utilized by the Ohio Department of Education. The Power Perception Profile: Perception of Other classifies power into the following seven categories: coercive, reward, information, expert, connection, legitimate, and referent power. The format consists of twenty-one pairs of forced choice statements in which the participant rates the leader on a three point scale for each pair of statements. The participant allocates three points between the two alternative choices in each pair, based on the relative importance of each alternative.

Expert power (M = 10.76) was identified as the most frequently used power method. Information power (M = 10.05) was also identified as very frequently utilized, while coercive power (M = 9.86), reward power (M = 9.67), and legitimate power (M = 9.24) were identified as frequently occurring. Referent power (M = 7.43) and connection power (M = 6.00) were cited as being utilized less frequently.

A concurrent study was conducted which compared responses across school district type (urban, n = 42; suburban, n = 53; rural, n = 63). Consistency of responses was high (Spearman Rho: Urban vs. Rural = .86; Urban vs. Suburban = .89). However, differences were noted in the use of information power $F(2, 155) = 6.66$, $p = .0017$, and reward power $F(2, 155) = 16.30$, $p = .0001$. Urban district superintendents' perceptions indicated a lesser use of information power by the state department of education than did superintendents of rural districts (Scheffe F = 6.64). Additionally, superintendents of urban districts perceived the state department of education as using a higher degree of reward power than did superintendents of either suburban (Scheffe F = 7.89) or rural districts (Scheffe F = 15.93).

When results were compared to the descriptions of Etzioni's Compliance Theory, a variety of power methods were utilized from each of the three power types (normative, remunerative, and coercive). Normative power was utilized by the state department of education as Etzioni's Compliance Theory describes. However, remunerative and coercive power methods were also identified as frequently utilized. This would not be consistent with the descriptions of Etzioni's Compliance Theory.

Based on the analysis of the findings of this study, several conclusions can be drawn.

1. It would appear that there is a high degree of consistency among school district superintendents' perceptions of the power methods employed by the Ohio Department of Education. Urban school superintendents viewed expert power and information power as highly utilized power methods.

2. Superintendents from various district types (urban, suburban, rural) again agree on the utilized power methods. However, urban district superintendents' perceptions

indicated a greater reliance on expert power than did superintendents of rural districts. This may be due in part to the ability of urban districts to employ administrative personnel to interpret and disseminate information from the state department of education, while rural districts, with smaller administrative staffs, may rely more heavily on state level consultants and supervisors.

3. Although reward power was perceived by all superintendents to be a secondary means of control, superintendents of urban districts perceived the state department of education as using a higher degree of reward power than did the superintendents of either suburban or rural districts.

4. Results indicated that the state department of education utilized power methods from each of the three power types (normative, remunerative, and coercive). While normative power and the limited use of remunerative power would be consistent with the normative nature of school district organization, the use of coercive power, as perceived by a large number of superintendents, is incongruous with the needs of a majority of normative organizations.

Implications resulting from the study are as follows:

1. The state department of education should strive to serve as an advocate for urban school districts. Assistance teams should be utilized to provide support for those districts whose students perform below minimum standards, as well as to provide assistance to districts who wish to implement innovative and/or experimental programs.

2. School people should be encouraged to work cooperatively toward similar goals. This could be accomplished through unified efforts in state sponsored agendas and regionalization of some grant-funded programs.

3. A unified stance should be presented by the Chief State School Officer and the Governor. This alliance will help to bond the needs of local school people with those legislators whose bills and legislative mandates drive many of the education reform movements present in schools.

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Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, and F-ratios for Three Groups of Superintendents on Each of Seven Types of Power Used by the State Department of Education

Power	Total N=158		Urban N=42		Suburban N=53		Rural N=63	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Coercive	9.709	3.341	9.857	2.581	9.830	3.507	9.508	3.671
Connection	6.000	2.851	6.000	2.776	5.623	2.339	6.317	3.267
Expert	11.013	2.822	10.762	2.377	11.000	2.710	11.190	3.192
Information	10.873	2.015	10.048	1.545	10.830	1.949	11.460	2.169
Legitimate	9.304	3.440	9.238	3.773	9.453	3.035	9.222	3.576
Referent	7.886	3.016	7.429	3.163	8.385	2.836	7.794	3.054
Reward	8.114	2.346	9.667	2.008	7.906	1.746	7.254	2.508

Table 1 (cont.)

Power	F-ratio	p*
Coercive	.188	.8286
Connection	.853	.4280
Expert	.289	.7495
Information	6.659	.0017*
Legitimate	.074	.9285
Referent	1.166	.3145
Reward	16.303	.0001*

* any p-value of .05 or less is considered significant

Table 2: An Analysis of Rank Order of State-Used Power Methods as Perceived by Superintendents

Rank	Power Method	Urban	Suburban	Rural
1	Expert	1	1	2
2	Information	2	2	1
3	Coercive	3	3	3
4	Legitimate	5	4	4
5	Reward	4	6	6
6	Referent	6	5	5
7	Connection	7	7	7

Spearman Rho:

Urban vs. Suburban	= .89
Urban vs. Rural	= .86
Suburban vs. Rural	= .96

Table 3: ANOVA Summary Table for the Three Groups of Superintendents on State Use of Information Power

Source	df	Sum Squares	Mean Square	F
Between Groups	2	50.441	25.221	6.659
Within Groups	155	587.027	3.787	p=.0017*
Total	157	637.468		

* any p-value of .05 or less is considered significant

Table 4: ANOVA Summary Table for the Three Groups of Superintendents on State Use of Reward Power

Source	df	Sum Squares	Mean Square	F
Between Groups	2	150.151	75.076	16.303
Within Groups	155	713.798	4.605	p=.0001*
Total	157	863.949		

* any p-value of .05 or less is considered significant

Table 5: Post Hoc Comparison of Superintendent Groups on State Use of Information Power

Group	Mean Comparison	Mean Difference	Scheffe F
Urban vs. Suburban	10.048 vs. 10.830	-.783	1.894
Urban vs. Rural	10.048 vs. 11.460	-1.413	6.640*
Suburban vs. Rural	10.830 vs. 11.460	-.630	1.509

* significant at .05

Table 6: Post Hoc Comparison of Superintendent Groups on State Use of Reward Power

Group	Mean Comparison	Mean Difference	Scheffe F
Urban vs. Suburban	9.667 vs. 7.906	1.761	7.890*
Urban vs. Rural	9.667 vs. 7.254	2.413	15.927*
Suburban vs. Rural	7.906 vs. 7.254	.652	1.327

* significant at .05

Table 7: Power Method Means and Frequencies

Power Method	Mean	Status	Power Type
Expert	11.013	Very Frequently Occurring	Normative
Information	10.873	Very Frequently Occurring	Remunerative
Coercive	9.709	Frequently Occurring	Coercive
Legitimate	9.304	Frequently Occurring	Coercive
Average	8.986	----------	----------
Reward	8.114	Not Frequently Occurring	Remunerative
Referent	7.886	Not Frequently Occurring	Normative
Connection	6.000	Very Infrequently Occurring	Coercive